



HOUSE
BUDGET
COMMITTEE

Budget Digest

Chairman Steve Womack

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THE BROKEN BUDGET RESOLUTION

One of the visible signs that the budget and appropriations process is broken and badly in need of reform is the budget resolution itself, including how the document is built and what it contains. Members of the Joint Select Committee on Budget and Appropriations Process Reform have observed that the current requirements of the budget resolution are obsolete and redundant, leading them to become visionary and political rather than informative and useful.

SIGNS OF THE PROBLEM

- **Inclusion of Non-Binding Requirements:** The functional categories in the budget resolution required by Section 301(a)(4) of the Budget Act are largely for display purposes and not connected to budget enforcement rules. They also do not align with congressional committees or Appropriations subcommittees.
- **Missed Deadlines:** While deadlines for various steps along the congressional budget process are set in statute, targets are often missed because there are no consequences for inaction. For example, the start of the current congressional budget process begins with the submission of the President's budget. Statutorily due on the first Monday of February each year, in the past 25 years, this deadline has been missed 11 times. This document contains information necessary for the Congressional Budget Office to build its baseline—the starting point of the budget resolution. As delays continue, deadlines become less and less achievable. There are no real incentives for completion of work on time or at all.
- **Partisan:** Budgets have become visionary and aspirational documents, leading to unrealistic budget objectives and goals that feed partisanship and cause delays in the funding cycle. They also often include policy prescriptions that have no budgetary impact.

THE NEED FOR REFORM

“As designed by the 1974 Budget Act, the budget resolution was intended to help Congress govern effectively. Unfortunately, the budget resolution as we know it today is often associated with government dysfunction and consistently-missed statutory deadlines. There even seems to be confusion from members – in both chambers and on both sides of the aisle – about the value of even doing a budget resolution each year.”

- Republican Co-Chairman Steve Womack
May 24, 2018, Hearing Remarks

“It is clear that the budget is no longer a statement of the nation's principles or reflection of a strategic national plan. When the budget even does exist, it tends to be political statements filled with wishful thinking, and it puts all of you as our leaders in the counterproductive position of getting sucked into the partisan battle instead of thoughtful policymaking.”

- Maya MacGuineas, Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget
May 24, 2018, Hearing Remarks

“Here we are 2 days after the Budget Act says Congress was supposed to have passed a budget resolution, and there is no uproar. There is no downside to having failed the act. It has, in fact, become an expectation that Congress won't follow the budget rules.”

- Congressman Derek Kilmer
April 17, 2018, Hearing Remarks